# The Saga of Cormac the Skald

Translation: W.G. Collingwood and J. Stefansson

# Index

# The Saga of Cormac the Skald

## Chapter 1 - Cormac’s Fore-Elders.

Harald Fairhair was king of Norway when this tale begins. There was a chief in the kingdom in those days and his name was Cormac; one of the Vik-folk by kindred, a great man of high birth. He was the mightiest of champions, and had been with King Harald in many battles.

He had a son called Ogmund, a very hopeful lad; big and sturdy even as a child; who when he was grown of age and come to his full strength, took to sea-roving in summer and served in the king’s household in winter. So he earned for himself a good name and great riches.

One summer he went roving about the British Isles and there he fell in with a man named Asmund Ashenside, who also was a great champion and had worsted many vikings and men of war. These two heard tell of one another and challenges passed between them. They came together and fought. Asmund had the greater following, but he withheld some of his men from the battle: and so for the length of four days they fought, until many of Asmund’s people were fallen, and at last he himself fled. Ogmund won the victory and came home again with wealth and worship.

His father said that he could get no greater glory in war, - "And now," said he, "I will find thee a wife. What sayest thou to Helga, daughter of Earl Frodi?"

"So be it," said Ogmund.

Upon this they set off to Earl Frodi’s house, and were welcomed with all honour. They made known their errand, and he took it kindly, although he feared that the fight with Asmund was likely to bring trouble. Nevertheless this match was made, and then they went their ways home. A feast was got ready for the wedding and to that feast a very great company came together.

Helga the daughter of Earl Frodi had a nurse that was a wise woman, and she went with her. Now Asmund the viking heard of this marriage, and set out to meet Ogmund. He bade him fight, and Ogmund agreed.

Helga’s nurse used to touch men when they went to fight: so she did with Ogmund before he set out from home, and told him that he would not be hurt much.

Then they both went to the fighting holm and fought. The viking laid bare his side, but the sword would not bite upon it. Then Ogmund whirled about his sword swiftly and shifted it from hand to hand, and hewed Asmund’s leg from under him: and three marks of gold he took to let him go with his life.

## Chapter 2 - How Cormac Was Born and Bred.

About this time King Harald Fairhair died, and Eric Bloodaxe reigned in his stead. Ogmund would have no friendship with Eric, nor with Gunnhild, and made ready his ship for Iceland.

Nor Ogmund and Helga had a son called Frodi: but when the ship was nearly ready, Helga took a sickness and died; and so did their son Frodi.

After that, they sailed to sea. When they were near the land, Ogmund cast overboard his high-seat-pillars; and where the high- seat-pillars had already been washed ashore, there they cast anchor, and landed in Midfiord.

At this time Skeggi of Midfiord ruled the countryside. He came riding toward them and bade them welcome into the firth, and gave them the pick of the land: which Ogmund took, and began to mark out ground for a house. Now it was a belief of theirs that as the measuring went, so would the luck go: if the measuring-wand seemed to grow less when they tried it again and again, so would that house's luck grow less: and if it grew greater, so would the luck be. This time the measure always grew less, though they tried it three times over.

So Ogmund built him a house on the sandhills, and lived there ever after. He married Dalla, the daughter of Onund the Seer, and their sons were Thorgils and Cormac. Cormac was dark-haired, with a curly lock upon his forehead: he was bright of blee and somewhat like his mother, big and strong, and his mood was rash and hasty. Thorgils was quiet and easy to deal with.

When the brothers were grown up, Ogmund died; and Dalla kept house with her sons. Thorgils worked the farm, under the eye of Midfiord-Skeggi.

# Chapter 3 - How Cormac Fell In Love.

There was a man named Thorkel lived at Tunga (Tongue). He was a wedded man, and had a daughter called Steingerd who was fostered in Gnupsdal (Knipedale).

Now it was one autumn that a whale came ashore at Vatnsnes (Watsness), and it belonged to the brothers, Dalla's sons. Thorgils asked Cormac would he rather go shepherding on the fell, or work at the whale. He chose to fare on the fell with the house-carles.

Tosti, the foreman, it was should be master of the sheep- gathering: so he and Cormac went together until they came to Gnupsdal. It was night: there was a great hall, and fires for men to sit at.

That evening Steingerd came out of her bower, and a maid with her. Said the maid, "Steingerd mine, let us look at the guests."

"Nay," she said, "no need": and yet went to the door, and stepped on the threshold, and spied across the gate. Now there was a space between the wicker and the threshold, and her feet showed through. Cormac saw that, and made this song:

"At the door of my soul she is standing,
So sweet in the gleam of her garment:
Her footfall awakens a fury,
A fierceness of love that I knew not,
Those feet of a wench in her wimple,
Their weird is my sorrow and troubling,
- Or naught may my knowledge avail me -
Both now and for aye to endure."

Then Steingerd knew she was seen. She turned aside into a corner where the likeness of Hagbard was carved on the wall, and peeped under Hagbard's beard. Then the firelight shone upon her face.

"Cormac," said Tosti, "seest eyes out yonder by that head of Hagbard?"

Cormac answered in song:

"There breaks on me, burning upon me,
A blaze from the cheeks of a maiden,
- I laugh not to look on the vision -
In the light of the hall by the doorway.
So sweet and so slender I deem her,
Though I spy bug a glimpse of an ankle
By the threshold: and through me there flashes
A thrill that shall age never more."

And then he made another song:

"The moon of her brow, it is beaming
'Neath the bright-litten heaven of her forehead:
So she gleams in her white robe, and gazes
With a glance that is keen as the falcon's.
But the star that is shining upon me
What spell shall it work by its witchcraft?
Ah, that moon of her brow shall be mighty
With mischief to her - and to me?"

Said Tosti, "She is fairly staring at thee!" - And he answered:

"She's a ring-bedight oak of the ale-cup,
And her eyes never left me unhaunted.
The strife in my heart I could hide not,
For I hold myself bound in her bondage.
O gay in her necklet, and gainer
In the game that wins hearts on her chessboard, -
When she looked at me long from the doorway
Where the likeness of Hagbard is carved."

Then the girls went into the hall, and sat down. He heard what they said about his looks, - the maid, that he was black and ugly, and Steingerd, that he was handsome and everyway as best could be, - "There is only one blemish," said she, "his hair is tufted on his forehead:" - and he said:

"One flaw in my features she noted
- With the flame of the wave she was gleaming
All white in the wane of the twilight -
And that one was no hideous blemish.
So highborn, so haughty a lady
- I should have such a dame to befriend me:
But she trows me uncouth for a trifle,
For a tuft in the hair on my brow!"

Said the maid, "Black are his eyes, sister, and that becomes him not." Cormac heard her, and said in verse:

"Yes, black are the eyes that I bring ye,
O brave in your jewels, and dainty.
But a draggle-tail, dirty-foot slattern
Would dub me ill-favoured and sallow.
Nay, many a maiden has loved me,
Thou may of the glittering armlet:
For I’ve tricks of the tongue to beguile them
And turn them from handsomer lads."

At this house they spent the night. In the morning when Cormac rose up, he went to a trough and washed himself; then he went into the ladies’ bower and saw nobody there, but heard folk talking in the inner room, and he turned and entered. There was Steingerd, and women with her.

Said the maid to Steingerd, "There comes thy bonny man, Steingerd."

"Well, and a fine-looking lad he is," said she.

Now she was combing her hair, and Cormac asked her, "Wilt thou give me leave?"

She reached out her comb for him to handle it. She had the finest hair of any woman. Said the maid, "Ye would give a deal for a wife with hair like Steingerd’s, or such eyes!"

He answered:

"One eye of the far of the ale-horn
Looking out of a form so bewitching,
Would a bridegroom count money to buy it
He must bring for it ransom three hundred.
The curls that she combs of a morning,
White-clothed in fair linen and spotless,
They enhance the bright hoard of her value, -
Five hundred might barely redeem them!"

Said the maid, "It’s give and take with the two of ye! But thou’lt put a big price upon the whole of her!" He answered:

"The tree of my treasure and longing,
It would take this whole Iceland to win her:
She is dearer than far-away Denmark,
And the doughty domain of the Hun-folk.
With the gold she is combing, I count her
More costly than England could ransom:
So witty, so wealthy, my lady
Is worth them, - and Ireland beside!"

Then Tosti came in, and called Cormac out to some work or other; but he said:

"Take m swift-footed steel for thy tiding,
Ay, and stint not the lash to him, Tosti:
On the desolate downs ye may wander
And drive him along till he weary.
I care not o’er mountain and moorland

The murrey-brown weathers to follow, -
Far liefer, I’d linger the morning
In long, cosy chatter with Steingerd."

Tosti said he would find it a merrier game, and went off; so Cormac sat down to chess, and right gay he was. Steingerd said he talked better than folk told of; and he sat there all the day; and then he made this song:

" ’Tis the dart that adorneth her tresses,
The deep, dewy grass of her forehead.
So kind to my keeping she gave it,
That good comb I shall ever remember!
A stranger was I when I sought her
- Sweet stem with the dragon’s hoard shining -"
With gold like the sea-dazzle gleaming -
The girl I shall never forget."

Tosti came off the fell and they fared home. After that Cormac used to go to Gnupsdal often to see Steingerd: and he asked his mother to make him good clothes, so that Steingerd might like him the most that could be. Dalla said there was a mighty great difference betwixt them, and it was far from certain to end happily if Thorkel at Tunga got to know.

# Chapter 4 - How Cormac Liked Black-Puddings.

Well Thorkel soon heard what was going forward, and thought it would turn out to his own shame and his daughter’s if Cormac would not pledge himself to take her or leave her. So he sent for Steingerd, and she went home.

Thorkel had a man called Narfi, a noisy, foolish fellow, boastful, and yet of little account. Said he to Thorkel, "If Cormac’s coming likes thee not, I can soon settle it."

"Very well," says Thorkel.

Now, in the autumn, Narfi’s work it was to slaughter the sheep. Once, when Cormac came to Tunga, he saw Steingerd in the kitchen. Narfi stood by the kettle, and when they had finished the boiling, he took up a black-pudding and thrust it under Cormac’s nose, crying:

"Cormac, how would ye relish one?
Kettle-worms I call them."

To which he answered:

"Black-puddings boiled, quoth Ogmund’s son,
Are a dainty, - fair befall them!"

And in the evening when Cormac made ready to go home he saw Narfi, and bethought him of those churlish words. "I think, Narfi," said he, "I am more like to knock thee down, than thou to rule my coming and going." And with that struck him an axe- hammer-blow, saying:

"Why foul with thy clowning and folly,
The food that is dressed for thy betters?
Thou blundering archer, what ails thee

To be aiming thy insults at me?"

And he made another song about:

"He asked me, the clavering cowherd
If I cared for - what was it he called them? -
The worms of the kettle. I warrant
He'll be wiping his eyes by the hearth-stone.
I deem that yon knave of the dunghill
Who dabbles the muck on the meadow
- Yon rook in his mud-spattered raiment -
Got a rap for his noise - like a dog."

# Chapter 5 - They Waylay Cormac: And The Witch Curses Him.

There was a woman named Thorveig, and she knew a deal too much. She lived at Steins-stadir (Stonestead) in Midfiord, and had two sons; the elder was Odd, and the younger Gudmund. They were great braggarts both of them.

This Odd often came to see Thorkel at Tunga, and used to sit and talk with Steingerd. Thorkel made a great show of friendship with the brothers, and egged them on to waylay Cormac. Odd said it was no more than he could do.

So one day when Cormac came to Tunga, Steingerd was in the parlour and sat on the dais. Thorveig's sons sat in the room, ready to fall upon him when he came in; and Thorkel had put a drawn sword on one side of the door, and on the other side Narfi had put a scythe in its shaft. When Cormac came to the hall-door the scythe fell down and met the sword, and broke a great notch in it. Out came Thorkel and began to upbraid Cormac for a rascal, and got fairly wild with his talk: then flung into the parlour and bade Steingerd out of it. Forth they went by another door, and he locked her into an outhouse, saying that Cormac and she would never meet again.

Cormac went in: and he came quicker than folk thought for, and they were taken aback. He looked about, and no Steingerd: but he saw the brothers whetting their weapons: so he turned on his heel and went, saying:

"The weapon that mows in the meadow
It met with the gay painted buckler,
When I came to encounter a goddess
Who carries the beaker of wine.
Beware! for I warn you of evil
When warriors threaten me mischief.
It shall not be for nought that I pour ye
The newly mixed mead of the gods."

And when he could find Steingerd nowhere, he made this song:

"She has gone, with the glitter of ocean
Agleam on her wrist and her bosom,
And my heart follows hard on her footsteps,
For the hall is in darkness without her.

I have gazed, but my glances can pierce not
The gloom of the desolate dwelling;
And fierce is my longing to find her,
The fair one who only can heal me."

After a while he came to the outhouse where Steingerd was, and burst it open and had talk with her.

"This is madness," cried she, "to come talking with me; for Thorveig’s sons are meant to have thy head."

But he answered:

"There wait they within that would snare me;
There whet they their swords for my slaying.
My bane they shall be not, the cowards,
The brood of the churl and the carline.
Let the twain of them find me and fight me
In the field, without shelter to shield them,
And ewes of the sheep should be surer
To shorten the days of the wolf."

So he sat there all day. By that time Thorkel saw that the plan he had made was come to nothing; and he bade the sons of Thorveig waylay Cormac in a dale near his garth. "Narfi shall go with ye two," said he; "but I will stay at home, and bring you help if need be."

In the evening Cormac set out, and when he came to the dale, he saw three men, and said in verse:

"There sit they in hiding to stay me
From the sight of my queen of the jewels:
But rude will their task be to reave me
From the roof of my bounteous lady.
The fainer the hatred they harbour
For him that is free of her doorway,
The fainer my love and my longing
For the lass that is sweeter than samphire."

Then leaped up Thorveig’s sons, and fought Cormac for a time: Narfi the while skulked and dodged behind them. Thorkel saw from his house that they were getting but slowly forward, and he took his weapons. In that nick of time Steingerd came out and saw what her father meant. She laid hold on his hands, and he got no nearer to help the brothers. In the end Odd fell, and Gudmund was so wounded that he died afterwards. Thorkel saw to them, and Cormac went home.

A little after this Cormac went to Thorveig and said he would have her no longer live there at the firth. "Thou shalt flit and go thy way at such a time," said he, "and I will give no blood- money for thy sons."

Thorveig answered, "It is like enough ye can hunt me out of the countryside, and leave my sons unatoned. But this way I’ll reward thee. Never shalt thou have Steingerd."

Said Cormac, "That’s not for thee to make or to mar, thou wicked old hag!"

## Chapter 6 - Cormac Wins His Bride and Loses Her.

After this, Cormac went to see Steingerd the same as ever: and once when they talked over these doings she said no ill of them: whereupon he made this song:

"There sat they in hiding to slay me
From the sight of my bride and my darling:
But weak were the feet of my foemen
When we fought on the island of weapons.
And the rush of the mightiest rivers
Shall race from the shore to the mountains
Or ever I leave thee, my lady,
And the love that I feast on to-day!"

"Say no such big words about it," answered she; "Many a thing may stand in the road."

Upon which he said:

"O sweet in the sheen of thy raiment,
The sight of thy beauty is gladdening!
What man that goes marching to battle,
What mate wouldst thou choose to be thine?"

And she answered:

"O giver of gold, O ring-breaker,
If the gods and the high fates befriend me,
I'd pledge me to Frodi's blithe brother
And bind him that he should be mine."

Then she told him to make friends with her father and get her in marriage. So for her sake Cormac gave Thorkel good gifts. Afterwards many people had their say in the matter; but in the end it came to this, - that he asked for her, and she was pledged to him, and the wedding was fixed: and so all was quiet for a while.

Then they had words. There was some falling-out about settlements. It came to such a pass that after everything was ready, Cormac began to cool off. But the real reason was, that Thorveig had bewitched him so that they should never have one another.

Thorkel at Tunga had a grown-up son, called Thorkel and by-named Tooth-gnasher. He had been abroad some time, but this summer he came home and stayed with his father.

Cormac never came to the wedding at the time it was fixed, and the hour passed by. This the kinsfolk of Steingerd thought a slight, deeming that he had broken off the match; and they had much talk about it.

## Chapter 7 - How Steingerd Was Married To Somebody Else.

Bersi lived in the land of Saurbae, a rich man and a good fellow: he was well to the fore, a fighter, and a champion at the holmgang. He had been married to Finna the Fair: but she was dead: Asmund was their son, young in years and early ripe. Helga was the sister of Bersi: she was unmarried, but a fine

woman and a pushing one, and she kept house for Bersi after Finna died.

At the farm called Muli (the Mull) lived Thord Arndisarson: he was wedded to Thordis, sister of Bork the Stout. They had two sons who were both younger than Asmund the son of Bersi.

There was also a man with Vali. His farm was named Vali's stead, and it stood on the way to Hrutafiord.

Now Thorveig the spaewife went to see Holmgang Bersi and told him her trouble. She said that Cormac forbade her staying in Midfiord: so Bersi bought land for her west of the firth, and she lived there for a long time afterwards.

Once when Thorkel at Tunga and his son were talking about Cormac's breach of faith and deemed that it should be avenged, Narfi said, "I see a plan that will do. Let us go to the west- country with plenty of goods and gear, and come to Bersi in Saurbae. He is wifeless. Let us entangle him in the matter. He would be a great help to us."

That counsel they took. They journeyed to Saurbae, and Bersi welcomed them. In the evening they talked of nothing but weddings. Narfi up and said there was no match so good as Steingerd, - "And a deal of folk say, Bersi, that she would suit thee."

"I have heard tell," he answered, "that there will be a rift in the road, though the match is a good one."

"If it's Cormac men fear," cried Narfi, "there is no need; for he is clean out of the way."

When Bersi heard that, he opened the matter to Thorkel Toothgnasher, and asked for Steingerd. Thorkel made a good answer, and pledged his sister to him.

So they rode north, eighteen in all, for the wedding. There was a man named Vigi lived at Holm, a big man and strong of his hands, a warlock, and Bersi's kinsman. He went with them, and they thought he would be a good helper. Thord Arndisarson too went north with Bersi, and many others, all picked men.

When they came to Thorkel's, they set about the wedding at once, so that no news of it might get out through the countryside: but all this was sore against Steingerd's will.

Now Vigi the warlock knew every man's affairs who came to the steading or left it. He sat outmost in the chamber, and slept by the hall door.

Steingerd sent for Narfi, and when they met she said, - "I wish thee, kinsman, to tell Cormac the business they are about: I wish thee to take this message to him."

So he set out secretly; but when he was a gone a little way Vigi came after, and bade him creep home and hatch no plots. They went back together, and so the night passed.

Next morning Narfi started forth again; but before he had gone so far as on the evening, Vigi beset him, and drove him back without mercy.

When the wedding was ended they made ready for their journey. Steingerd took her gold and jewels, and they rode towards Hrutafiord, going rather slowly. When they were off, Narfi set out and came to Mel. Cormac was building a wall, and hammering it with a mallet. Narfi rode up, with his shield and sword, and carried on strangely, rolling his eyes about like a hunted beast. Some men were up on the wall with Cormac when he came, and his horse shied at them. Said Cormac, - "What news, Narfi?

What folk were with you last night?"

"Small tidings, but we had guests enough," answered he.

"Who were the guests?"

"There was Holmgang Bersi, with seventeen more to sit at his wedding."

"Who was the bride?"

"Bersi wed Steingerd Thorkel's daughter," said Narfi. "When they were gone she sent me here to tell thee the news."

"Thou hast never a word but ill," said Cormac, and leapt upon him and struck at the shield: and as it slipped aside he was smitten on the breast and fell from his horse; and the horse ran away with the shield (hanging to it).

Cormac's brother Thorgils said this was too much. "It serves him right," cried Cormac. And when Narfi woke out of his swoon they got speech of him.

Thorgils asked, "What manner of men were at the wedding?"

Narfi told him.

"Did Steingerd know this before?"

"Not till the very evening they came," answered he; and then told of his dealings with Vigi, saying that Cormac would find it easier to whistle on Steingerd's tracks and go on a fool's errand than to fight Bersi. Then said Cormac:

"Now see to thy safety henceforward,
And stick to thy horse and thy buckler;
Or this mallet of mine, I can tell thee,
Will meet with thine ear of a surety.
Now say no more stories of feasting,
Though seven in a day thou couldst tell of,
Or bumps thou shalt comb on thy brainpan,
Thou that breakest the howes of the dead.

Thorgils asked about the settlements between Bersi and Steingerd. Her kinsmen, said Narfi, were now quit of all farther trouble about that business, however it might turn out; but her father and brother would be answerable for the wedding.

## Chapter 8 - How Cormac Chased Bersi And His Bride.

Cormac took his horse and weapons and saddle-gear.

"What now, brother?" asked Thorgils.

He answered:

"My bride, my betrothed has been stolen,
And Bersi the raider has robbed me.
I who offer the song-cup of Odin -
Who else? - should be riding beside her.
She loved me - no lord of them better:
I have lost her - for me she is weeping:
The dear, dainty darling that kissed me,
For day upon day of delight."

Said Thorgils, "A risky errand is this, for Bersi will get home before you catch him. And yet I will go with thee."

Cormac said he would away and bide for no man. He leapt on his horse forthwith, and galloped as hard as he could. Thorgils made haste to gather men, - they were eighteen in all, - and came up with Cormac on the hause that leads to Hrutafiord, for he had foundered his horse. So they turned to Thorveig the spaewife's farmsteading, and found that Bersi was gone aboard her boat.

She had said to Bersi, "I wish thee to take a little gift from me, and good luck follow it."

This was a target bound with iron; and she said she reckoned Bersi would hardly be hurt if he carried it to shield him, - "but it is little worth beside this steading thou hast given me." He thanked her for the gift, and so they parted. Then she got men to scuttle all the boats on the shore, because she knew beforehand that Cormac and his folk were coming.

When they came and asked her for a boat, she said she would do them no kindness without payment; - "Here is a rotten boat in the boathouse which I would lend for half a mark."

Thorgils said it would be in reason if she asked two ounces of silver. Such matters, said Cormac, should not stand in the way; but Thorgils said he would sooner ride all round the water-head. Nevertheless Cormac had his will, and they started in the boat; but they had scarcely put off from shore when it filled, and they had hard work to get back to the same spot.

"Thou shouldst pay dearly for this, thou wicked old hag," said Cormac, "and never be paid at all."

That was no mighty trick to play them, she said; and so Thorgils paid her the silver; about which Cormac made this song:

"I'm a tree that is tricked out in war-gear,
She, the trim rosy elf of the shuttle:
And I break into singing about her
Like the bat at the well, never ceasing.
With the dew-drops of Draupnir the golden
Full dearly folk buy them their blessings;
Then lay down three ounces and leave them
For the leaky old boat that we borrowed."

Bersi got hastily to horse, and rode homewards; and when Cormac saw that he must be left behind, he made this song:

"I tell you, the goddess who glitters
With gold on the perch of the falcon,
The bride that I trusted, by beauty,

From the bield of my hand has been taken.
On the boat she makes glad in its gliding
She is gone from me, reft from me, ravished!
O shame, that we linger to save her,
Too sweet for the prey of the raven!

They took their horses and rode round the head of the firth. They met Vali and asked about Bersi; he said that Bersi had come to Muli and gathered men to him, - "A many men."

"Then we are too late," said Cormac, "if they have got men together."

Thorgils begged Cormac to let them turn back, saying there was little honour to be got; but Cormac said he must see Steingerd.

So Vali went with them and they came to Muli where Bersi was and many men with him. They spoke together. Cormac said that Bersi had betrayed him in carrying off Steingerd, "But now we would take the lady with us, and make him amends for his honour."

To this said Thord Arndisarson, "We will offer terms to Cormac, but the lady is in Bersi's hands."

"There is no hope that Steingerd will go with you," said Bersi; "but I offer my sister to Cormac in marriage, and I reckon he will be well wedded if take Helga."

"This is a good offer," said Thorgils; "let us think of it, brother."

But Cormac started back like a restive horse.

# Chapter 9 - Of Another Witch, And Two Magic Swords.

There was a woman called Thordis - and a shrew she was - who lived at Spakonufell (Spaequean's-fell), in Skagastrand. She, having foresight of Cormac's goings, came that very day to Muli, and answered this matter on his behalf, saying, "Never give him yon false woman. She is a fool, and not fit for any pretty man. Woe will his mother be at such a fate for her lad!"

"Aroint thee, foul witch!" cried Thord. They should see, said he, that Helga would turn out fine. But Cormac answered, "Said it may be, for sooth it may be: I will never think of her."

"Woe to us, then," said Thorgils, "for listening to the words of yon fiend, and slighting this offer!"

Then spoke Cormac, "I bid thee, Bersi, to the holmgang within half a month, at Leidholm, in Middal."

Bersi said he would come, but Cormac should be the worse for his choice.

After this Cormac went about the steading to look for Steingerd. When he found her he said she had betrayed him in marrying another man.

"It was thou that made the first breach, Cormac," said she, "for this was none of my doing."

Then said he in verse:

"Thou sayest my faith has been forfeit,
O fair in thy glittering raiment;
But I wearied my steed and outwore it,
And for what but the love that bare thee?
O fainer by far was I, lady,
To founder my horse in the hunting -
Nay, I spared not the jade when I spurred it -
Than to see thee the bride of my foe."

After this Cormac and his men went home. When he told his mother how things had gone, "Little good," she said, "will thy luck do us. Ye have slighted a fine offer, and you have no chance against Bersi, for he is a great fighter and he has good weapons."

Now, Bersi owned the sword they call Whitting; a sharp sword it was, with a life-stone to it; and that sword he had carried in many a fray.

"Whether wilt thou have weapons to meet Whitting?" she asked. Cormac said he would have an axe both great and keen.

Dalla said he should see Skeggi of Midfiord and ask for the loan of his sword, Skofnung. So Cormac went to Reykir and told Skeggi how matters stood, asking him to lend Skofnung. Skeggi said he had no mind to lend it. Skofnung and Cormac, said he, would never agree: "It is cold and slow, and thou art hot and hasty."

Cormac rode away and liked it ill. He came home to Mel and told his mother that Skeggi would not lend the sword. Now Skeggi had the oversight of Dalla’s affairs, and they were great friends; so she said, "He will lend the sword, though not all at once."

That was not what he wanted, answered Cormac, - "If he withhold it not from thee, while he does withhold it from me." Upon which she answered that he was a thwart lad.

A few days afterwards Dalla told him to go to Reykir. "He will lend thee the sword now," said she. So he sought Skeggi and asked for Skofnung.

"Hard wilt thou find it to handle," said Skeggi. "There is a pouch to it, and that thou shalt let be. Sun must not shine on the pommel of the hilt. Thou shalt not wear it until fighting is forward, and when ye come to the field, sit all alone and then draw it. Hold the edge toward thee, and blow on it. Then will a little worm creep from under the hilt. Then slope thou the sword over, and make it easy for that worm to creep back beneath the hilt."

"Here’s a tale of tricks, thou warlock!" cried Cormac

"Nevertheless," answered Skeggi, "it will stand thee in good stead to know them."

So Cormac rode home and told his mother, saying that her will was of great avail with Skeggi. He showed the sword, and tried to draw it, but it would not leave the sheath.

"Thou are over wilful, my son," said she.

Then he set his feet against the hilts, and pulled until he tore the pouch off, at which Skofnung creaked and groaned, but never came out of the scabbard.

Well, the time wore on, and the day came. He rode away with fifteen men; Bersi also rode to the holm with as many. Cormac came there first, and told Thorgils that he would sit apart by himself. So he sat down and ungirt the sword.

Now, he never heeded whether the sun shone upon the hilt, for he had girt the sword on him outside his clothes. And when he tried to draw it he could not, until he set his feet upon the hilts. Then the little worm came, and was not rightly done by; and so the sword came groaning and creaking out of the scabbard, and the good luck of it was gone.

# Chapter 10 - The Fight On Leidarholm.

After that Cormac went to his men. Bersi and his party had come by that time, and many more to see the fight.

Cormac took up Bersi's target and cut at it, and sparks flew out.

Then a hide was taken and spread for them to stand on. Bersi spoke and said, "Thou, Cormac, hast challenged me to the holmgang; instead of that, I offer thee to fight in simple sword- play. Thou art a young man and little tried; the holmgang needs craft and cunning, but sword-play, man to man, is an easy game."

Cormac answered, "I should fight no better even so. I will run the risk, and stand on equal footing with thee, every way."

"As thou wilt," said Bersi.

It was the law of the holmgang that the hide should be five ells long, with loops at its corners. Into these should be driven certain pins with heads to them, called tjosnur. He who made it ready should go to the pins in such a manner that he could see sky between his legs, holding the lobes of his ears and speaking the forewords used in the rite called "The Sacrifice of the tjosnur." Three squares should be marked round the hide, each one foot broad. At the outermost corners of the squares should be four poles, called hazels; when this is done, it is a hazelled field. Each man should have three shields, and when they were cut up he must get upon the hide if he had given way from it before, and guard himself with his weapons alone thereafter. He who had been challenged should strike the first stroke. If one was wounded so that blood fell upon the hide, he should fight no longer. If either set one foot outside the hazel poles "he went on his heel," they said; but he "ran" if both feet were outside. His own man was to hold the shield before each of the fighters. The one who was wounded should pay three marks of silver to be set free.

So the hide was taken and spread under their feet. Thorgils held his brother's shield, and Thord Arndisarson that of Bersi. Bersi struck the first blow, and cleft Cormac's shield; Cormac struck at Bersi to the like peril. Each of them cut up and spoilt three shields of the other's. Then it was Cormac's turn. He struck at Bersi, who parried with Whitting. Skofnung cut the point off Whitting in front of the ridge. The sword-point flew upon Cormac's hand, and he was wounded in the thumb. The joint was cleft, and blood dropped upon the hide. Thereupon folk went between them and stayed the fight.

Then said Cormac, "This is a mean victory that Bersi has gained; it is only from my bad luck; and yet we must part."

He flung down his sword, and it met Bersi's target. A shard was broken out of Skofnung, and fire flew out of Thorveig's gift.

Bersi asked the money for release, Cormac said it would be paid; and so they parted.

# Chapter 11 - The Songs That Were Made About The Fight.

Steinar was the name of a man who was the son of Onund the Seer, and brother of Dalla, Cormac's mother. He was an unpeaceful man, and lived at Ellidi.

Thither rode Cormac from the holme, to see his kinsman, and told him of the fight, at which he was but ill pleased. Cormac said he meant to leave the country, - "And I want thee to take the money to Bersi."

"Thou art no bold man," said Steinar, "but the money shall be paid if need be."

Cormac was there some nights; his hand swelled much, for it was not dressed.

After that meeting, Holmgang Bersi went to see his brother. Folk asked how the holmgang had gone, and when he told them they said that two bold men had struck small blows, and he had gained the victory only through Cormac's mishap. When Bersi met Steingerd, and she asked how it went, he made this verse:

"They call him, and truly they tell it,
A tree of the helmet right noble:
But the master of manhood must bring me
Three marks for his ransom and rescue.
Though stout in the storm of the bucklers
In the stress of the Valkyrie's tempest
He will bid me no more to the battle,
For the best of the struggle was ours."

Steinar and Cormac rode from Ellidi and passed through Saurbae. They saw men riding towards them, and yonder came Bersi. He greeted Cormac and asked how the wound was getting on. Cormac said it needed little to be healed.

"Wilt thou let me heal thee?" said Bersi; "though from me thou didst get it: and then it will be soon over."

Cormac said nay, for he meant to be his lifelong foe. Then answered Bersi:

"Thou wilt mind thee for many a season
How we met in the high voice of Hilda.
Right fain I go forth to the spear-mote
Being fitted for every encounter.
There Cormac's gay shield from his clutches
I clave with the bane of the bucklers,
For he scorned in the battle to seek me
If we set not the lists of the holmgang."

Thus they parted; and then Cormac went home to Mel and saw his mother. She healed his hand; it had become ugly and healed badly. The notch in Skofnung they whetted, but the more they whetted the bigger it was. So he went to Reykir, and flung Skofnung at Skeggi's feet, with this verse:

"I bring thee, thus broken and edgeless,
The blade that thou gavest me, Skeggi!
I warrant thy weapon could bite not:
I won not the fight by its witchcraft.
No gain of its virtue nor glory
I got in the strife of the weapons,
When we met for to mingle the sword-storm
For the maiden my singing adorns."

Said Skeggi, "It went as I warned thee." Cormac flung forth and went home to Mel: and when he met with Dalla he made this song:-

"To the field went I forth, O my mother
The flame of the armlet who guardest, -
To dare the cave-dweller, my foeman
And I deemed I should smite him in battle.
But the brand that is bruited in story
It brake in my hand as I held it;
And this that should thrust men to slaughter
Is thwarted and let of its might.

For I borrowed to bear in the fighting
No blunt-edged weapon of Skeggi:
There is strength in the serpent that quivers
By the side of the land of the girdle.
But vain was the virtue of Skofnung
When he vanquished the sharpness of Whitting;
And a shard have I shorn, to my sorrow,
From the shearer of ringleted mail.

Yon tusker, my foe, wrought me trouble
When targe upon targe I had carven:
For the thin wand of slaughter was shattered
And it sundered the ground of my handgrip.
Loud bellowed the bear of the sea-king
When he brake from his lair in the scabbard,
At the hest of the singer, who seeketh
The sweet hidden draught of the gods.

Afar must I fare, O my mother,
And a fate points the pathway before me,
For that white-wreathen tree may woo not
- Two wearisome morrows her outcast.
And it slays me, at home to be sitting,
So set is my heart on its goddess,
As a lawn with fair linen made lovely
- I can linger no third morrow's morn."

After that, Cormac went one day to Reykir and talked with Skeggi, who said the holmgang had been brought to scorn. Then answered Cormac:

"Forget it, O Frey of the helmet,
- Lo, I frame thee a song in atonement -
That the bringer of blood, even Skofnung,
I bare thee so strangely belated.
For by stirrers of storm was I wounded;
They smote me where perches the falcon:
But the blade that I borrowed, O Skeggi,
Was borne in the clashing of edges.

I had deemed, O thou Grey of fighting,
Of the fierce song of Odin, - my neighbour,
I had deemed that a brand meet for bloodshed
I bare to the crossways of slaughter.
Nay, - thy glaive, it would gape not nor ravin
Against him, the rover who robbed me:
And on her, as the surge on the shingle,
My soul beats and breaks evermore."

# Chapter 12 - Bersi’s Bad Luck At The Thor’s-Ness Thing.

In the winter, sports were held at Saurbae. Bersi’s lad, Asmund, was there, and likewise the sons of Thord; but they were younger than he, and nothing like so sturdy. When they wrestled Asmund took no heed to stint his strength, and the sons of Thord often came home blue and bleeding. Their mother Thordis was ill pleased, and asked her husband would he give Bersi a hint to make it up on behalf of his son. Nay, Thord answered, he was loath to do that.

"Then I’ll find my brother Bork," said she, "and it will be just as bad in the end."

Thord bade her do no such thing. "I would rather talk it over with him," said he; and so, at her wish, he met Bersi, and hinted that some amends were owing.

Said Bersi, "Thou art far too greedy of getting, nowadays. This kind of thing will end in losing thee thy good name. Thou wilt never want while anything is to be got here."

Thord went home, and there was a coolness between them while that winter lasted.

Spring slipped by, until it was time for the meeting at Thor’s- ness. By then, Bersi thought he saw through this claim of Thord’s, and found Thordis at the bottom of it. For all that, he made ready to go to the Thing. By old use and wont these two neighbours should have gone riding together; so Bersi set out and came to Muli, but when he got there Thord was gone.

"Well," said he, "Thord has broken old use and wont in awaiting me no longer."

"If breach there be," answered Thordis, "it is thy doing. This is nothing to what we owe thee, and I doubt there will be more to follow."

They had words. Bersi said that harm would come of her evil counsel; and so they parted.

When he left the house he said to his men, "Let us turn aside to the shore and take a boat; it is a long way to ride round the waterhead." So they took a boat - it was one of Thord’s - and went their way.

They came to the meeting when most other folks were already there, and went to the tent of Olaf Peacock of Hjardarholt (Herdholt), for he was Bersi’s chief. It was crowded inside, and Bersi found no seat. He used to sit next Thord, but that place was filled. In it there sat a big and strong-looking man, with a bear-skin coat, and a hood that shaded his face. Bersi stood a while before him, but the seat was not given up. He asked the man for his name, and was told he might call him Bruin, or he might call him Hoodie - which-ever he liked; whereupon he said in verse:

"Who sits in the seat of the warriors,
With the skin of the bear wrapped around him,
So wild in his look? - Ye have welcomed
A wolf to your table, good kinsfolk!
Ah, now may I know him, I reckon!
Doth he name himself Bruin, or Hoodie? -
We shall meet once again in the morning,
And maybe he’ll prove to be - Steinar."

"And it’s no use for thee to hide thy name, thou in the bearskin," said he.

"No more it is," he answered. "Steinar I am, and I have brought money to pay thee for Cormac, if so be it is needed. But first I bid thee to fight. It will have to be seen whether thou get the two marks of silver, or whether thou lose them both."

Upon which quoth Bersi:

"They that waken the storm of the spear-points -
For slaughter and strife they are famous -
To the island they bid me for battle,
Nor bitter I think it nor woeful;
For long in that craft am I learned
To loosen the Valkyrie’s tempest
In the lists, and I fear not to fight them -
Unflinching in battle am I.

"Well I wot, though," said he, "that ye and your gang mean to make away with me. But I would let you know that I too have something to say about it - something that will set down your swagger, maybe."

"It is not thy death we are seeking," answered Steinar; "all we want is to teach thee thy true place."

Bersi agreed to fight him, and then went out to a tent apart and took up his abode there.

Now one day the word went round for bathing in the sea. Said Steinar to Bersi, "Wilt try a race with me, Bersi?"

"I have given over swimming," said he, "and yet I’ll try."

Bersi’s manner of swimming was to breast the waves and strike out with all his might. In so doing he showed a charm he wore round his neck. Steinar swam at him and tore off the lucky-stone with the bag it was in, and threw them both into the water, saying in verse:

"Long I’ve lived,
And I’ve let the gods guide me;
Brown hose I never wore
To bring the luck beside me.
I’ve never knit
All to keep me thriving
Round my neck a bag of worts,
- And lo! I’m living!"

Upon that they struck out to land.

But this turn that Steinar played was Thord’s trick to make Bersi lose his luck in the fight. And Thord went along the shore at low water and found the luck-stone, and hid it away.

Now Steinar had a sword that was called after Skrymir the giant: it was never fouled, and no mishap followed it. On the day fixed, Thord and Steinar went out of the tent, and Cormac also came to the meeting to hold the shield of Steinar. Olaf Peacock got men to help Bersi at the fight, for Thord had been used to hold his shield, but this time failed him. So Bersi went to the trysting-place with a shield-bearer who is not named in the story, and with the round target that once had belonged to Thorveig.

Each man was allowed three shields. Bersi cut up two, and then Cormac took the third. Bersi hacked away, but Whitting his sword stuck fast in the iron border of Steinar’s shield. Cormac whirled it up just when Steinar was striking out. He struck the shield-edge, and the sword glanced off, slit Bersi’s buttock, sliced his thigh down to the knee-joint, and stuck in the bone. And so Bersi fell.

"There!" cried Steinar, "Cormac’s fine is paid."

But Bersi leapt up, slashed at him, and clove his shield. The sword-point was at Steinar’s breast when Thord rushed forth and dragged him away, out of reach.

"There!" cried Thord to Bersi, "I have paid thee for the mauling of my sons."

So Bersi was carried to the tent, and his wound was dressed. After a while, Thord came in; and when Bersi saw him he said:

"When the wolf of the war-god was howling
Erstwhile in the north, thou didst aid me:
When it gaped in my hand, and it girded
At the Valkyries’ gate for to enter.
But now wilt thou never, O warrior,
At need in the storm-cloud of Odin
Give me help in the tempest of targes
- Untrusty, unfaithful art thou.

"For when I was a stripling I showed me
To the stems of the lightning of battle
Right meet for the mist of the war-maids;

- Ah me! that was said long ago.
But now, and I may not deny it
My neighbours in earth must entomb me,
At the spot I have sought for grave-mound
Where Saurbae lies level and green."

Said Thord, "I have no wish for thy death; but I own it is no sorrow to see thee down for once."

To which Bersi answered in song:

"The friend that I trusted has failed me
In the fight, and my hope is departed:
I speak what I know of; and note it,
Ye nobles, - I tell ye no leasing.
Lo, the raven is ready for carnage,
But rare are the friends who should succour.
Yet still let them scorn me and threaten,
I shrink not, I am not dismayed."

After this, Bersi was taken home to Saurbae, and lay long in his wounds.

But when he was carried into the tent, at that very moment Steinar spoke thus to Cormac:

"Of the reapers in harvest of Hilda
- Thou hast heard of it - four men and eight men
With the edges of Skrymir to aid me
I have urged to their flight from the battle.
Now the singer, the steward of Odin,
Hath smitten at last even Bersi
With the flame of the weapon that feedeth
The flocks of the carrion crows."

"I would have thee keep Skrymir now for thy own, Cormac," said he, "because I mean this fight to be my last."

After that, they parted in friendly wise: Steinar went home, and Cormac fared to Mel.

# Chapter 13 - Steingerd Leaves Bersi.

Next it is told of Bersi. His wound healed but slowly. Once on a time a many folk were met to talk about that meeting and what came of it, and Bersi made this song:

"Thou didst leave me forlorn to the sword-stroke,
Strong lord of the field of the serpent!
And needy and fallen ye find me,
Since my foeman ye shielded from danger.
Thus cunning and counsel are victors,
When the craft of the spear-shaft avails not;
But this, as I think, is the ending,
O Thord, of our friendship for ever!"

A while later Thord came to his bedside and brought back the luck-stone; and with it he healed Bersi, and they took to their friendship again and held it unbroken ever after.

Because of these happenings, Steingerd fell into loathing of Bersi and made up her mind to part with him; and when she had got everything ready for going away she went to him and said: "First ye were called Eygla’s-Bersi, and then Holmgang-Bersi, but now your right name will be Breech-Bersi!" and spoke her divorce from him.

She went north to her kinsfolk, and meeting with her brother Thorkel she bade him seek her goods again from Bersi - her pin- money and her dowry, saying that she would not own him now that he was maimed. Thorkel Toothgnasher never blamed her for that, and agreed to undertake her errand; but the winter slipped by and his going was put off.

# Chapter 14 - The Bane Of Thorkel Toothgnasher.

Afterwards, in the spring, Thorkel Toothgnasher set out to find Bersi and to seek Steingerd’s goods again. Bersi said that his burden was heavy enough to bear, even though both together underwent the weight of it. "And I shall not pay the money!" said he.

Said Thorkel, "I bid thee to the holmgang at Orrestholm beside Tjaldanes (Tentness)."

"That ye will think hardly worth while," said Bersi, "such a champion as you are; and yet I undertake for to come."

So they came to the holme and fell to the holmgang. Thord carried the shield before Bersi, and Vali was Thorkel’s shield- bearer. When two shields had been hacked to splinters, Bersi bade Thorkel take the third; but he would not. Bersi still had a shield, and a sword that was long and sharp.

Said Thorkel, "The sword ye have, Bersi, is longer than lawful."

"That shall not be," cried Bersi; and took up his other sword, Whitting, two-handed, and smote Thorkel his deathblow. Then sang he:-

"I have smitten Toothgnasher and slain him,
And I smile at the pride of his boasting.
One more to my thirty I muster,
And, men! say ye this of the battle:
In the world not a lustier liveth
Among lords of the steed of the oar-bench;
Though by eld of my strength am I stinted
To stain the black wound-bird with blood."

After these things Vali bade Bersi to the holmgang, but he answered in this song:

"They that waken the war of the mail-coats,
For warfare and manslaying famous,
To the lists they have bid me to battle,
Nor bitter I think it not woeful.
It is sport for yon swordsmen who goad me
To strive in the Valkyries’ tempest
On the holme; but I fear not to fight them -
Unflinching in battle am I!"

The were even about to begin fighting, when Thord came and spoke to them saying: "Woeful waste of life I call it, if brave men shall be smitten down for the sake of any such matters. I am ready to make it up between ye two."

To this they agreed, and he said: "Vali, this methinks is the most likely way of bringing you together. Let Bersi take thy sister Thordis to wife. It is a match that may well be to thy worship."

Bersi agreed to this, and it was settled that the land of Brekka should go along with her as a dowry; and so this troth was plighted between them. Bersi afterwards had a strong stone wall built around his homestead, and sat there for many winters in peace.

# Chapter 15 - The Rescue Of Steinvor Slim-ankles.

There was a man named Thorarin Alfsson, who lived in the north at Thambardal; that is a dale which goes up from the fiord called Bitra. He was a big man and mighty, and he was by-named Thorarin the Strong. He had spent much of his time in seafaring (as a chapman) and so lucky was he that he always made the harbour he aimed at.

He had three sons; one was named Alf, the next Loft, and the third Skofti. Thorarin was a most overbearing man, and his sons took after him. They were rough, noisy fellows.

Not far away, at Tunga (Tongue) in Bitra, lived a man called Odd. His daughter was named Steinvor, a pretty girl and well set up; her by-name was Slim-ankles. Living with Odd were many fisherman; among them, staying there for the fishing-season, was one Glum, an ill-tempered carle and bad to deal with.

Now once upon a time these two, Odd and Glum, were in talk together which were the greatest men in the countryside. Glum reckoned Thorarin to be foremost, but Odd said Holmgang Bersi was better than he in every way.

"How can ye make that out?" asked Glum.

"Is there any likeness whatever," said Odd, "between the bravery of Bersi and the knavery of Thorarin?"

So they talked about this until they fell out, and laid a wager upon it.

Then Glum wend and told Thorarin. He grew very angry and made many a threat against Odd. And in a while he went and carried off Steinvor from Tunga, all to spite her father; and he gave out that if Odd said anything against it, the worse for him: and so took her home to Thambardal.

Things went on so for a while, and then Odd went to see Holmgang Bersi, and told him what had happened. He asked him for help to get Steinvor back and to wreak vengeance for that shame. Bersi answered that such words had been better unsaid, and bade him go home and take no share in the business. "But yet," added he, "I promise that I will see to it."

No sooner was Odd gone than Bersi made ready to go from home. He rode fully armed, with Whitting at his belt, and three spears; he came to Thambardal when the day was far spent and the women were coming out of the bower. Steinvor saw him and turning to meet him told of her unhappiness.

"Make ready to go with me," said he; and that she did.

He would not go to Thambardal for nothing, he said; and so he turned to the door where men were sitting by long fires. He knocked at the door, and out there came a man - his name was Thorleif. But Thorarin knew Bersi's voice, and rushed forth with a great carving-knife and laid on to him. Bersi was aware of it, and drew Whitting, and struck him his death-blow.

Then he leapt on horseback and set Steinvor on his knee and took his spears which she had kept for him. He rode some way into the wood, where in a hidden spot he left his horse and Steinvor, bidding her await him. Then he went to a narrow gap through which the high-road ran, and there made ready to stand against his foes.

In Thambardal there was anything but peace. Thorleif ran to tell the sons of Thorarin that he lay dead in the doorway. They asked who had done the deed. He told them. Then they went after Bersi and steered the shortest way to the gap, meaning to get there first; but by that time he was already first at the gap.

When they came near him, Bersi hurled a spear at Alf, and it went right through him. Then Loft cast at Bersi, but he caught the spear on his target and it dropped off. Then Bersi threw at Loft and killed him, and so he did by Skofti.

When all was over, the house-carles of the brothers came up. Thorleif turned back to meet them, and they all went home together.

After that Bersi went to find Steinvor, and mounted his horse. He came home before men were out of bed. They asked him about his journey and he told them. When Odd met him he asked about the fight and how it had passed, and Bersi answered in this verse:

"There was one fed the wolves has encountered
His weird in the dale of the Bowstring -
Thorarin the Strong, 'neath the slayer
Lay slain by the might of my weapon.
And loss of their lives men abided
When Loft fell, and Alf fell, and Skofti.
They were four, yonder kinsmen, and fated -
They were fey - and I met them, alone!"

After that Odd went home, but Steinvor was with Bersi, though it misliked Thordis, his wife. By this time his stone wall was some-what broken down, but he had it built up again; and it is said that no blood-money was ever paid for Thorarin and his sons. So the time went on.

# Chapter 16 - How Vali Fell Before An Old Man And A Boy.

Once on a day when Thordis and Bersi were talking together, said he, "I have been thinking I might ask Olaf Peacock for a child of his to foster."

"Nay," said she, "I think little of that. It seems to me a great trouble, and I doubt if folk will reckon more of us for it."

"It means that I should have a sure friend," answered he. "I have many foes, and I am growing heavy with age."

So he went to see Olaf, and asked for a child to foster. Olaf took it with thanks, and Bersi carried Halldor home with him and got Steinvor to be nurse. This too misliked Thordis, and she laid hands on every penny she could get (for fear it should go to Steinvor and the foster-child).

At last Bersi took to ageing much. There was one time when men riding to the Thing stayed at his house. He sat all by himself, and his food was brought him before the rest were served. He had porridge while other folk had cheese and curds. Then he made this verse:

"To batten the black-feathered wound-bird
With the blade of my axe have I stricken
Full thirty and five of my foemen;
I am famed for the slaughter of warriors.
May the fiends have my soul if I stain not
My sharp-edged falchion once over!
And then let the breaker of broadswords
Be borne - and with speed - to the grave!"

"What?" said Halldor; "hast thou a mind to kill another man, then?"

Answered Bersi, "I see the man it would rightly serve!"

Now Thordis let her brother Vali feed his herds on the land of Brekka. Bersi bade his house-carles work at home, and have no dealings with Vali; but still Halldor thought it a hardship that Bersi had not his own will with his own wealth. One day Bersi made this verse:

"Here we lie,
Both on one settle -
Halldor and I,
Men of no mettle.
Youth ails thee,
But thou'lt win through it;
Age ails me,
And I must rue it!"

"I do hate Vali," said Halldor; and Bersi answered thus in verse:

"Yon Vali, so wight as he would be,
Well wot I our pasture he grazes;
Right fain yonder fierce helmet-wearer
Under foot my dead body would trample!
But often my wrongs have I wreaked
In wrath on the mail-coated warrior -
On the stems of the sun of the ocean
I have stained the wound-serpent for less!"

And again he said:

"With eld I am listless and lamed -
I, the lord of the gold of the armlet:
I sit, and am still under many
A slight from the warders of spear-meads.
Though shield-bearers shape for the singer
To shiver alone in the grave-mound,
Yet once in the war would I redden
The wand that hews helms ere I fail."

"Thy heart is not growing old, foster-father mine!" cried Halldor.

Upon that Bersi fell into talk with Steinvor, and said to her "I am laying a plot, and I need thee to help me."

She said she would if she could.

"Pick a quarrel," said he, "with Thordis about the milk-kettle, and do thou hold on to it until you whelm it over between you. Then I will come in and take her part and give thee nought but bad words. Then go to Vali and tell him how ill we treat thee."

Everything turned out as he had planned. She went to Vali and told him that things were no way smooth for her; would he take her over the gap (to Bitra to her father's): and so he did.

But when he was on the way back again, out came Bersi and Halldor to meet him. Bersi had a halberd in one hand and a staff in the other, and Halldor had Whitting. As soon as Vali saw them he turned and hewed at Bersi. Halldor came at his back and fleshed Whitting in his hough-sinews. Thereupon he turned sharply and fell upon Halldor. Then Bersi set the halberd-point betwixt his shoulders. That was his death-wound.

Then they set his shield at his feet and his sword at his head, and spread his cloak over him; and after that got on horseback and rode to five homesteads to make known the deed they had done and then rode home. Men went and buried Vali, and the place where he fell has ever since been called Vali's fall.

Halldor was twelve winters old when these doings came to pass.

# Chapter 17 - How Steingerd Was Married Again.

Now there was a man named Thorvald, the son of Eystein, bynamed the Tinker: he was a wealthy man, a smith, and a skald; but he was mean-spirited for all that. His brother Thorvard lived in the north country at Fliot (Fleet); and they had many kinsmen, - the Skidings they were called, - but little luck or liking.

Now Thorvald the Tinker asked Steingerd to wife. Her folk were for it, and she said nothing against it; and so she was wed to him in the very same summer in which she left Bersi.

When Cormac heard the news he made as though he knew nothing whatever about the matter; for a little earlier he had taken his goods aboard ship, meaning to go away with his brother. But one morning early he rode from the ship and went to see Steingerd; and when he got talk with her, he asked would she make him a shirt. To which she answered that he had no business to pay her visits; neither Thorvald nor his kinsmen would abide it, she said, but have their revenge.

Thereupon he made his voice:

"Nay, think it or thole it I cannot,
That thou, a young fir of the forest
Enwreathed in the gold that thou guardest,
Shouldst be given to a tinkering tinsmith.
Nay, scarce can I smile, O thou glittering
In silk like the goddess of Baldur,
Since thy father handfasted and pledged thee,
So famed as thou art, to a coward."

"In such words," answered Steingerd, "an ill will is plain to hear. I shall tell Thorvald of this ribaldry: no man would sit still under such insults."

Then sang Cormac:

"What gain is to get if he threatens,
White goddess in raiment of beauty,
The scorn that the Skidings may bear me?
I'll set them a weft for their weaving!
I'll rhyme you the roystering caitiffs
Till rocks go afloat on the water;
And lucky for them if they loosen
The line of their fate that I ravel!"

Thereupon they parted with no blitheness, and Cormac went to his ship.

# Chapter 18 - Cormac's Voyage To Norway.

The two brothers had but left the roadstead, when close beside their ship, uprose a walrus. Cormac hurled at it a pole-staff, which struck the beast, so that it sank again: but the men aboard thought that they knew its eyes for the eyes of Thorveig the witch. That walrus came up no more, but of Thorveig it was heard that she lay sick to death; and indeed folk say that this was the end of her.

Then they sailed out to sea, and at last came to Norway, where at that time Hakon, the foster-son of Athelstan, was king. He made them welcome, and so they stayed there the winter long with all honour.

Next summer they set out to the wars, and did many great deeds. Along with them went a man called Siegfried, a German of good birth; and they made raids both far and wide. One day as they were gone up the country eleven men together came against the two brothers, and set upon them; but this business ended in their overcoming the whole eleven, and so after a while back to their ship. The vikings had given them up for lost, and fain were their folk when they came back with victory and wealth.

In this voyage the brothers got great renown: and late in the summer, when winter was coming on, they made up their minds to steer for Norway. They met with cold winds; the sail was behung with icicles, but the brothers were always to the fore. It was on his voyage that Cormac made the song:

"O shake me yon rime from the awning;
Your singer's a-cold in his berth;
For the hills are all hooded, dear Skardi,
In the hoary white veil of the firth.
There's one they call Wielder of Thunder

I would were as chill and as cold;
But he leaves not the side of his lady
As the lindworm forsakes not its gold."

"Always talking of her now!" said Thorgils; "and yet thou wouldst not have her when thou couldst."

"That was more the fault of witchcraft," answered Cormac, "that any want of faith in me."

Not long after they were sailing hard among crags, and shortened sail in great danger.

"It is a pity Thorvald Tinker is not with us here!" said Cormac.

Said Thorgils with a smile, "Most likely he is better off than we, to-day!"

But before long they came to land in Norway.

## Chapter 19 - How Cormac Fought In Ireland, And Went Home To Iceland; And How He Met Steingerd Again.

While they were abroad there had been a change of kings; Hakon was dead, and Harald Greyfell reigned in his stead. They offered friendship to the king, and he took their suit kindly; so they went with him to Ireland, and fought battles there.

Once upon a time when they had gone ashore with the king, a great host came against him, and as the armies met, Cormac made this song:

"I dread not a death from the foemen,
Though we dash at them, buckler to buckler,
While our prince in the power of his warriors
Is proud of me foremost in battle.
But the glimpse of a glory comes o'er me
Like the gleam of the moon on the skerry,
And I faint and I fail for my longing,
For the fair one at home in the North."

"Ye never get into danger," said Thorgils, "but ye think of Steingerd!"

"Nay," answered Cormac, "but it's not often I forget her."

Well: this was a great battle, and king Harald won a glorious victory. While his men drove the rout before him, the brothers were shoulder to shoulder; and they fell upon nine men at once and fought them. And while they were at it, Cormac sang:

"Fight on, arrow-driver, undaunted,
And down with the foemen of Harald!
What are nine? they are nought! Thou and I, lad,
Are enough; - they are ours! - we have won them!
But - at home, - in the arms of an outlaw
That all the gods loathe for a monster,
So white and so winsome she nestles
- Yet once she was loving to me!"

"It always comes down to that!" said Thorgils. When the fight was over, the brothers had got the victory, and the nine men had fallen before them; for which they won great praise from the king, and many honours beside.

But while they were ever with the king in his warfarings, Thorgils was aware that Cormac was used to sleep but little; and he asked why this might be. This was the song Cormac made in answer:

"Surf on a rock-bound shore of the sea-king's blue domain-
Look how it lashes the crags, hark how it thunders again!
But all the din of the isles that the Delver heaves in foam
In the draught of the undertow glides out to the sea-gods' home.

Now, which of us two should test? Is it thou, with thy heart at ease,
Or I that am surf on the shore in the tumult of angry seas?
- Drawn, if I sleep, to her that shines with the ocean-
- Dashed, when I wake, to woe, for the want of my glittering dream."

"And now let me tell you this, brother," he went on. "Hereby I give out that I am going back to Iceland."

Said Thorgils, "There is many a snare set for thy feet, brother, to drag thee down, I know not whither."

But when the king heard of his longing to begone, he sent for Cormac, and said that he did unwisely, and would hinder him from his journey. But all this availed nothing, and aboard ship he went.

At the outset they met with foul winds, so that they shipped great seas, and the yard broke. Then Cormac sang:

"I take it not ill, like the Tinker
If a trickster had foundered his muck-sled;
For he loves not rough travelling, the losel,
And loath would he be of this uproar.
I flinch not, - nay, hear it, ye fearless
Who flee not when arrows are raining, -
Though the steeds of the ocean be storm-bound
And stayed in the harbour of Solund."

So they pushed out to sea, and hard weather they tholed. Once on a time when the waves broke over the deck and drenched them all, Cormac made this song:

"O the Tinker's a lout and a lubber,
And the life of a sailor he dares not,
When the snow-crested surges caress us
And sweep us away with their kisses,
He bides in a berth that is warmer,
Embraced in the arms of his lady;
And lightly she lulls him to slumber,
- But long she has reft me of rest!"

They had a very rough voyage, but landed at last in Midfiord, and anchored off shore. Looking landward they beheld where a lady was riding by; and Cormac knew at once that it was Steingerd. He bade his men launch a boat, and rowed ashore. He went quickly from the boat, and got a horse, and

rode to meet her. When they met, he leapt from horseback and helped her to alight, making a seat for her beside him on the ground.

Their horses wandered away: the day passed on, and it began to grow dark. At last Steingerd said, "It is time to look for our horses."

Little search would be needed, said Cormac; but when he looked about, they were nowhere in sight. As it happened, they were hidden in a gill not far from where the two were sitting.

So, as night was hard at hand, they set out to walk, and came to a little farm, where they were taken in and treated well, even as they needed. That night they slept each on either side of the carven wainscot that parted bed from bed: and Cormac made this song:

"We rest, O my beauty, my brightest,
But a barrier lies ever between us.
So fierce are the fates and so mighty
- I feel it - that rule to their rede.
Ah, nearer I would be, and nigher,
Till nought should be left to dispart us,
- The wielder of Skofnung the wonder,
And the wearer of sheen from the deep."

"It was better thus," said Steingerd: but he sang:

"We have slept ’neath one roof-tree - slept softly,
O sweet one, O queen of the mead-horn,
O glory of sea-dazzle gleaming,
These grim hours, - these five nights, I count them.
And here in the kettle-prow cabined
While the crow’s day drags on in the darkness,
How loathly me seems to be lying,
How lonely, - so near and so far!"

"That," said she, "is all over and done with; name it no more." But he sang:

"The hot stone shall float, - ay, the hearth-stone
Like a husk of the corn on the water,
- Ah, woe for the wight that she loves not! -
And the world, - ah, she loathes me! - shall perish,
And the fells that are famed for their hugeness
Shall fail and be drowned in the ocean,
Or ever so gracious a goddess
Shall grow into beauty like Steingerd."

Then Steingerd cried out that she would not have him make songs upon her: but he went on:

"I have known it and noted it clearly,
O neckleted fair one, in visions,
- Is it doom for my hopes, - is it daring
To dream? - O so oft have I seen it! -
Even this, - that the boughs of thy beauty,
O braceleted fair one, shall twine them

Round the hill where the hawk loves to settle,
The hand of thy lover, at last."

"That," said she, "never shall be, if I can help it. Thou didst let me go, once for all; and there is no more hope for thee."

So then they slept the night long; and in the morning, when Cormac was making ready to be gone, he found Steingerd, and took the ring off his finger to give her.

"Fiend take thee and thy gold together!" she cried. And this is what he answered:

"To a dame in her broideries dainty
This drift of the furnace I tendered;
O day of ill luck, for a lover
So lured, and so heartlessly cheated!
Too blithe in the pride of her beauty -
The bliss that I crave she denies me;
So rich that no boon can I render,
- And my ring she would hurl to the fiends!"

So Cormac rode forth, being somewhat angry with Steingerd, but still more so with the Tinker. He rode home to Mel, and stayed there all the winter, taking lodgings for his chapmen near the ship.

# Chapter 20 - Of A Spiteful Song That Cormac Never Made; And How Angry Steingerd Was.

Now Thorvald the Tinker lived in the north-country at Svinadal (Swindale), but his brother Thorvard at Fliot. In the winter Cormac took his way northward to see Steingerd; and coming to Svinadal he dismounted and went into the chamber. She was sitting on the dais, and he took his seat beside her; Thorvald sat on the bench, and Narfi by him.

Then said Narfi to Thorvald, "How canst thou sit down, with Cormac here? It is no time, this, for sitting still!"

But Thorvald answered, "I am content; there is no harm done it seems to me, though they do talk together."

"That is ill," said Narfi.

Not long afterwards Thorvald met his brother Thorvard and told him about Cormac’s coming to his house.

"Is it right, think you," said Thorvard, "to sit still while such things happen?"

He answered that there was no harm done as yet, but that Cormac’s coming pleased him not.

"I’ll mend that," cried Thorvard, "if you dare not. The shame of it touches us all."

So this was the next thing, - that Thorvard came to Svinadal, and the Skiding brothers and Narfi paid a gangrel beggar-man to sing a song in the hearing of Steingerd, and to say that Cormac had made it, - which was a lie. They said that Cormac had taught this song to one called Eylaug, a kinswoman of his; and these were the words:

"I wish an old witch that I know of,
So wealthy and proud of her havings,
Were turned to a steed in the stable
- Called Steingerd - and I were the rider!
I’d bit her, and bridle, and saddle,
I’d back her and drive her and tame her;
So many she owns for her masters,
But mine she will never become!"

Then Steingerd grew exceedingly angry, so that she would not so much as hear Cormac named. When he heard that, he went to see her. Long time he tried in vain to get speech with her; but at last she gave this answer, - that she misliked his holding her up to shame, - "And now it is all over the country-side!"

Cormac said it was not true; but she answered, "Thou mightest flatly deny it, if I had not heard it."

"Who sang it in thy hearing?" asked he.

She told him who sang it, - "And thou needest not hope for speech with me if this prove true."

He rode away to look for the rascal, and when he found him the truth was forced out at last. Cormac was very angry, and set on Narfi and slew him. That same onset was meant for Thorvald, but he hid himself in the shadow and skulked, until men came between then and parted them. Said Cormac:

"There, hide in the house like a coward,
And hope not hereafter to scare me
With the scorn of thy brethren the Skidings, -
I’ll set them a weft for their weaving!
I’ll rhyme on the swaggering rascals
Till rocks go afloat on the water;
And lucky for you if ye loosen
The line of your fate that I ravel!"

This went all over the country-side and the feud grew fiercer between them. The brothers Thorvald and Thorvard used big words, and Cormac was wroth when he heard them.

# Chapter 21 - How Thorvard Would Not Fight, But Tried To Get The Law Of Cormac.

After this Thorvard sent word from Fliot that he was fain to fight Cormac, and he fixed time and place, saying that he would now take revenge for that song of shame and all other slights.

To this Cormac agreed; and when the day came he went to the spot that was named, but Thorvard was not there, nor any of his men. Cormac met a woman from the farm hard by, who greeted him, and they asked each other for news.

"What is your errand?" said she; "and why are you waiting here?"

Then he answered with this song:

"Too slow for the struggle I find him,
That spender of fire from the ocean,
Who flung me a challenge to fight him
From Fleet in the land of the North.
That half-witted hero should get him
A heart made of clay for his carcase,
Though the mate of the may with the necklace
Is more of a fool than his fere!"

"Now," said Cormac, "I bid Thorvard anew to the holmgang, if he can be called in his right mind. Let him be every man’s nithing if he come not!" and then he made this song:

"The nithing shall silence me never,
Though now for their shame they attack me,
But the wit of the Skald is my weapon,
And the wine of the gods will uphold me.
And this they shall feel in its fulness;
Here my fame has its birth and beginning;
And the stout spears of battle shall see it,
If I ’scape from their hands with my life."

Then the brothers set on foot a law-suit against him for libel. Cormac’s kinsmen backed him up to answer it, and he would let no terms be made, saying that they deserved the shame put upon them, and no honour; he was not unready to meet them, unless they played him false. Thorvard had not come to the holmgang when he had been challenged, and therefore the shame had fallen of itself upon him and his, and they must put up with it.

So time passed until the Huna-water Thing. Thorvard and Cormac both went to the meeting, and once they came together.

"Much enmity we owe thee," said Thorvard, "and in many ways. Now therefore I challenge thee to the holmgang, here at the Thing."

Said Cormac, "Wilt thou be fitter than before? Thou hast drawn back time after time."

"Nevertheless," said Thorvard, "I will risk it. We can abide thy spite no longer."

"Well," said Cormac, "I’ll not stand in the way;" and went home to Mel.

# Chapter 22 - What The Witch Did For Them In Their Fights.

At Spakonufell (Spae-wife’s-fell) lived Thordis the spae-wife, of whom we have told before, with her husband Thorolf. They were both at the Thing, and many a man thought her good-will was of much avail. So Thorvard sought her out, to ask her help against Cormac, and gave her a fee; and she made him ready for the holmgang according to her craft.

Now Cormac told his mother what was forward, and she asked if he thought good would come of it.

"Why not?" said he.

"That will not be enough for thee," said Dalla. "Thorvard will never make bold to fight without witchcraft to help him. I think it wise for thee to see Thordis the spae-wife, for there is going to be foul play in this affair."

"It is little to my mind," said he; and yet went to see Thordis, and asked her help.

"Too late ye have come," said she. "No weapon will bite on him now. And yet I would not refuse thee. Bide here to-night, and seek thy good luck. Anyway, I can manage so that iron bite thee no more than him."

So Cormac stayed there for the night; and, awaking, found that some one was groping round the coverlet at his head. "Who is there?" he asked, but whoever it was made off, and out at the house-door, and Cormac after. And then he saw it was Thordis, and she was going to the place where the fight was to be, carrying a goose under her arm.

He asked what it all meant, and she set down the goose, saying, "Why couldn't ye keep quiet?"

So he lay down again, but held himself awake, for he wanted to know what she would be doing. Three times she came, and every time he tried to find out what she was after. The third time, just as he came out, she had killed two geese and let the blood run into a bowl, and she had taken up the third goose to kill it.

"What means this business, foster-mother?" said he.

"True it will prove, Cormac, that you are a hard one to help," said she. "I was going to break the spell Thorveig laid on thee and Steingerd. Ye could have loved one another been happy if I had killed the third goose and no one seen it."

"I believe nought of such things," cried he; and this song he made about it:

"I gave her an ore at the ayre,
That the arts of my foe should not prosper;
And twice she has taken the knife,
And twice she has offered the offering;
But the blood is the blood of a goose -
What boots it if two should be slaughtered? -
Never sacrifice geese for a Skald
Who sings for the glory of Odin!"

So they went to the holmgang: but Thorvald gave the spae-wife a still greater fee, and offered the sacrifice of geese; and Cormac said:

"Trust never another man's mistress!
For I know, on this woman who weareth
The fire of the field of the sea-king
The fiends have been riding to revel.
The witch with her hoarse cry is working
For woe when we go to the holmgang,
And if bale be the end of the battle
The blame, be assured, will be hers."

"Well," she said, "I can manage so that none shall know thee." Then Cormac began to upbraid her, saying she did nought but ill, and wanting to drag her out to the door to look at her eyes in the sunshine. His brother Thorgils made him leave that: "What good will it do thee?" said he.

Now Steingerd gave out that she had a mind to see the fight; and so she did. When Cormac saw her he made this song:

"I have fared to the field of the battle,
O fair one that wearest the wimple!
And twice for thy sake have I striven;
What stays me as now from thy favour?
This twice have I gotten thee glory,
O goddess of ocean! and surely
To my dainty delight, to my darling
I am dearer by far than her mate."

So then they set to. Cormac's sword bit not at all, and for a long while they smote strokes one upon the other, but neither sword bit. At last Cormac smote upon Thorvard's side so great a blow that his ribs gave way and were broken; he could fight no more, and thereupon they parted. Cormac looked and saw where a bull was standing, which he slew for a sacrifice; and being heated, he doffed his helmet from his head, saying this song:

"I have fared to the field of the battle,
O fair one that wearest the bracelet!
Even three times for thee have I striven,
And this thou canst never deny me.
But the reed of the fight would not redden,
Though it rang on the shield-bearer's harness;
For the spells of a spae-wife had blunted
My sword that was eager for blood."

He wiped the sweat from him on the corner of Steingerd's mantle; and said:

"So oft, being wounded and weary,
I must wipe my sad brow on thy mantle.
What pangs for thy sake are my portion,
O pine-tree with red gold enwreathed!
Yet beside thee he snugs on the settle
As thou seamest thy broidery, - that rhymester!
And the shame of it whelms me in sorrow,
O Steingerd! - that rascal unslain!"

And then Cormac prayed Steingerd that she would go with him: but Nay, she said; she would have her own way about men. So they parted, and both were ill pleased.

Thorvard was taken home, and she bound his wounds. Cormac was now always meeting with Steingerd. Thorvard healed but slowly; and when he could get on his feet he went to see Thordis, and asked her what was best to help his healing.

"A hill there is," answered she, "not far away from here, where elves have their haunt. Now get you the bull that Cormac killed, and redden the outer side of the hill with its blood, and make a feast for the elves with its flesh. Then thou wilt be healed."

So they sent word to Cormac that they would buy the bull. He answered that he would sell it, but then he must have the ring that was Steingerd’s. So they brought the ring, took the bull, and did with it as Thordis bade them do. On which Cormac made a song:

"When the workers of wounds are returning,
And with them the sacrifice reddened,
Then a lady in raiment of linen,
Who loved me, time was, - she will ask:
My ring, - have ye robbed me? - where is it?
- I have wrought them no little displeasure:
For the swain that is swarthy has won it,
The son of old Ogmund, the skald."

It fell out as he guessed. Steingerd was very angry because they had sold her ring.

# Chapter 23 - How Cormac Beat Thorvard Again.

After that, Thorvard was soon healed, and when he thought he was strong again, he rode to Mel and challenged Cormac to the holmgang.

"It takes thee long to tire of it," said Cormac: "but I’ll not say thee nay."

So they went to the fight, and Thordis met Thorvard now as before, but Cormac sought no help from her. She blunted Cormac’s sword, so that it would not bite, but yet he struck so great a stroke on Thorvard’s shoulder that the collarbone was broken and his hand was good for nothing. Being so maimed he could fight no longer, and had to pay another ring for his ransom.

Then Thorolf of Spakonufell set upon Cormac and struck at him. He warded off the blow and sang this song:

"This reddener of shields, feebly wrathful,
His rusty old sword waved against me,
Who am singer and sacred to Odin!
Go, snuffle, most wretched of men, thou!
A thrust of thy sword is as thewless
As thou, silly stirrer of battle.
What danger to me from thy daring,
Thou doited old witch-woman’s carle?"

Then he killed a bull in sacrifice according to use and wont, saying, "Ill we brook your overbearing and the witchcraft of Thordis:" and he made this song:

"The witch in the wave of the offering
Has wasted the flame of the buckler,
Lest its bite on his back should be deadly
At the bringing together of weapons.
My sword was not sharp for the onset
When I sought the helm-wearer in battle;
But the cur got enough to cry craven,
With a clout that will mind him of me!"

After that each party went home, and neither was well pleased with these doings.

# Chapter 24 - How They All Went Out To Norway.

Now all the winter long Cormac and Thorgils laid up their ship in Hrutafiord; but in spring the chapmen were off to sea, and so the brothers made up their minds for the voyage. When they were ready to start, Cormac went to see Steingerd: and before they two parted he kissed her twice, and his kisses were not at all hasty. The Tinker would not have it; and so friends on both sides came in, and it was settled that Cormac should pay for this that he had done.

"How much?" asked he.

"The two rings that I parted with," said Thorvard. Then Cormac made a song:

"Here is gold of the other’s well gleaming
In guerdon for this one and that one, -
Here is treasure of Fafnir the fire-drake
In fee for the kiss of my lady.
Never wearer of ring, never wielder
Of weapon has made such atonement;
Never dearer were deeply-drawn kisses, -
For the dream of my bliss is betrayed."

And then, when he started to go aboard his ship he made another song:

"One song from my heart would I send her
Ere we shall, ere I leave her and lose her,
That dainty one, decked in her jewels
Who dwells in the valley of Swindale.
And each word that I utter shall enter
The ears of that lady of bounty,
Saying - Bright one, my beauty, I love thee,
Ah, better by far than my life!"

So Cormac went abroad and his brother Thorgils went with him; and when they came to the king’s court they were made welcome.

Now it is told that Steingerd spoke to Thorvald the Tinker that they also should abroad together. He answered that it was mere folly, but nevertheless he could not deny her. So they set off on their voyage: and as they made their way across the sea, they were attacked by vikings who fell on them to rob them and to carry away Steingerd. But it so happened that Cormac heard of it; and he made after them and gave good help, so that they saved everything that belonged to them, and came safely at last to the court of the king of Norway.

One day Cormac was walking in the street, and spied Steingerd sitting within doors. So he went into the house and sat down beside her, and they had a talk together which ended in his kissing her four kisses. But Thorvald was on the watch. He drew his sword, but the women-folk rushed in to part them, and word was sent to King Harald. He said they were very troublesome people to keep in order. - "But let me settle this matter between you," said he; and they agreed.

Then spake the king: "One kiss shall be atoned for by this, that Cormac helped you to get safely to land. The next kiss is Cormac’s, because he saved Steingerd. For the other two he shall pay two ounces of gold."

Upon which Cormac sang the same song that he had made before:

"Here is gold of the otter’s well gleaming
In guerdon for this one and that one, -
Here is treasure of Fafnir the fire-drake
In fee for the kiss of my lady.
Never wearer of ring, never wielder
Of weapon has made such atonement;
Never dearer were deeply-drawn kisses -
And the dream of my bliss is betrayed."

Another day he was walking in the street and met Steingerd again. He turned to her and prayed her to walk with him. She would not; whereupon he laid hand on her, to lead her along. She cried out for help; and as it happened, the king was standing not far off, and went up to them. He thought this behaviour most unseemly, and took her away, speaking sharply to Cormac. King Harald made himself very angry over this affair; but Cormac was one of his courtiers, and it was not long before he got into favour again, and then things went fair and softly for the rest of the winter.

# Chapter 25 - How They Cruised With The King’s Fleet, And Quarrelled, And Made It Up.

In the following spring King Harald set forth to the land of Permia with a great host. Cormac was one of the captains in that warfaring, and in another ship was Thorvald: the other captains of ships are not named in our story.

Now as they were all sailing in close order through a narrow sound, Cormac swung his steering-oar and hit Thorvald a clout on the ear, so that he fell from his place at the helm in a swoon; and Cormac’s ship hove to, when she lost her rudder. Steingerd had been sitting beside Thorvald; she laid hold of the tiller, and ran Cormac down. When he saw what she was doing, he sang:

"There is one that is nearer and nigher
To the noblest of dames than her lover:
With the haft of the helm is he smitten
On the hat-block - and fairly amidships!
The false heir of Eystein - he falters -
He falls in the poop of his galley!
Nay! steer not upon me, O Steingerd,
Though stoutly ye carry the day!"

So Cormac’s ship capsized under him; but his crew were saved without loss of time, for there were plenty of people round about. Thorvald soon came round again, and they all went on their way. The king offered to settle the matter between them; and when they both agreed, he gave judgment that Thorvald’s hurt was atoned for by Cormac’s upset.

In the evening they went ashore; and the king and his men sat down to supper. Cormac was sitting outside the door of a tent, drinking out of the same cup with Steingerd. While they were busy at it, a young fellow for mere sport and mockery stole the brooch out of Cormac’s fur cloak, which he had doffed and laid aside; and when he came to take his cloak again, the brooch was gone. He sprang up and rushed after the young fellow, with the spear that he called Vigr (the spear) and shot at him, but missed. This was the song he made about it:

"The youngster has pilfered my pin,
As I pledged the gay dame in the beaker;
And now must we brawl for a brooch
Like boys when they wrangle and tussle.
Right well have I shafted my spear,
Though I shot nothing more than the gravel:
But sure, if I missed at my man,
The moss has been prettily slaughtered!"

After this they went on their way to the land of Permia, and after that they went home again to Norway.

# Chapter 26 - How Cormac Saved Steingerd Once More From Pirates; And How They Parted For Good And All.

Thorvald the Tinker fitted out his ship for a cruise to Denmark, and Steingerd sailed with him. A little afterwards the brothers set out on the same voyage, and late one evening they made the Brenneyjar.

There they saw Thorvald’s ship riding, and found him aboard with part of his crew; but they had been robbed of all their goods, and Steingerd had been carried off by Vikings. Now the leader of those Vikings was Thorstein, the son of that Asmund Ashenside, the old enemy of Ogmund, the father of Cormac and Thorgils.

So Thorvald and Cormac met, and Cormac asked how came it that his voyage had been so unlucky.

"Things have not turned out for the best, indeed," said he.

"What is the matter?" asked Cormac. "Is Steingerd missing?"

"She is gone," said Thorvald, "and all our goods."

"Why don’t you go after her?" asked Cormac.

"We are not strong enough," said Thorvald.

"Do you mean to say you can’t?" said Cormac.

"We have not the means to fight Thorstein," said Thorvald. "But if thou hast, go in and fight for thy own hand."

"I will," said Cormac.

So at nightfall the brothers went in a boat and rowed to the Viking fleet, and boarded Thorstein’s ship. Steingerd was in the cabin on the poop; she had been allotted to one of the Vikings; but most of the crew were ashore round the cooking-fires. Cormac got the story out of the men who were cooking, and they told all the brothers wanted to know. They clambered on board by the ladder; Thorgils dragged the bridegroom out to the gunwale, and Cormac cut him down then and there. Then he dived into the sea with Steingerd and swam ashore; but when he was nearing the land a swarm of eels twisted round his hands and feet, so that he was dragged under. On which he made this song:

"They came at me yonder in crowds,
O kemp of the shield-serpents’ wrangle!
When I fared on my way through the flood,
That flock of the wights of the water.
And ne’er to the gate of the gods
Had I got me, if there had I perished;
Yet once and again have I won,
Little woman, thy safety in peril!"

So he swam ashore and brought Steingerd back to her husband.

Thorvald bade Steingerd to go, at last, along with Cormac, for he had fairly won her, and manfully. That was what he, too, desired, said Cormac; but "Nay," said Steingerd, "she would not change knives."

"Well," said Cormac, "it was plain that this was not to be. Evil beings," he said, "ill luck, had parted them long ago." And he made this song:

"Nay, count not the comfort had brought me,
Fair queen of the ring, thy embrace!
Go, mate with the man of thy choosing,
Scant mirth will he get of thy grace!
Be dearer henceforth to thy dastard,
False dame of the coif, than to me; -
I have spoken the word; I have sung it; -
I have said my last farewell to thee."

And so he bade her begone with her husband.

# Chapter 27 - The Swan-Songs of Cormac.

After these things the brothers turned back to Norway, and Thorvald the Tinker made his way to Iceland. But the brothers went warfaring round about Ireland, Wales, England and Scotland, and they were reckoned to be the most famous of men. It was they who first built the castle of Scarborough; they made raids into Scotland, and achieved many great feats, and led a mighty host; and in all that host none was like Cormac in strength and courage.

Once upon a time, after a battle, Cormac was driving the flying foe before him while the rest of his host had gone back aboard ship. Out of the woods there rushed against him one as monstrous big as an idol - a Scot; and a fierce struggle began. Cormac felt for his sword, but it had slipped out of the sheath; he was over-matched, for the giant was possessed; but yet he reached out, caught his sword, and struck the giant his death-blow. Then the giant cast his hands about Cormac, and gripped his sides so hard that the ribs cracked, and he fell over, and the dead giant on top of him, so that he could not

stir. Far and wide his folk were looking for him, but at last they found him and carried him aboard ship. Then he made this song:

"When my manhood was matched in embraces
With the might of yon horror, the strangler,
Far other I found it than folding
That fair one ye know in my arms!
On the high-seat of heroes with Odin
From the horn of the gods I were drinking
O’er soon - let me speak it to warriors -
If Skrymir had failed of his aid."

Then his wounds were looked to; they found that his ribs were broken on both sides. He said it was no use trying to heal him, and lay there in his wounds for a time, while his men grieved that he should have been so unwary of his life.

He answered them in song:

"Of yore never once did I ween it,
When I wielded the cleaver of targets,
That sickness was fated to foil me -
A fighter so hardy as I.
But I shrink not, for others must share it,
Stout shafts of the spear though they deem them,
- O hard at my heart is the death-pang, -
Thus hopeless the bravest may die."

And this song also:

"He came not with me in the morning,
Thy mate, O thou fairest of women,
When we reddened for booty the broadsword,
So brave to the hand-grip, in Ireland:
When the sword from its scabbard was loosened
And sang round my cheeks in the battle
For the feast of the Fury, and blood-drops
Fell hot on the neb of the raven."

And then he began to fail.

This was his last song:

"There was dew from the wound smitten deeply
That drained from the stroke of the sword-edge;
There was red on the weapon I wielded
In the war with the glorious and gallant:
Yet not where the broadsword, - the blood wand, -
Was borne by the lords of the falchion,
But low in the straw like a laggard,
O my lady, dishonoured I die!"

He said that his will was to give Thorgils his brother all he had - the goods he owned and the host he led; for he would like best, he said, that his brother should have the use of them.

So then Cormac died. Thorgils became captain over the host, and was long time in viking.

And so ends the story.